

# THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

Vol. IX

May 1932

No. 5

## Vachel Lindsay

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

IT is easy, in one way, to give to Vachel Lindsay his place; and in another way it is extremely difficult, and at present probably impossible, to do anything of the sort. It is easy, for example, to say that his most characteristic work is utterly unlike the work of any other poet, living or dead. But saying that is saying only what everyone knows already, and does not need to be told again.

On the other hand, it is far from easy to say how large or lofty a place may sometime be assigned to him, or to his contemporaries, by a posterity that in all probability will not be so patient or so lenient with literature as posterity has been in the past—which may not be saying much for poster-

ity. Time and distance will be required for anything like a valid estimate of the man, or of his contribution to American letters. There was never before, in this or in any country, so peculiar and apparently so triumphant a combination of the troubadour and the evangelist. There was never a minstrel more sincere and uncompromising in his will to wander and to sing, and to sing always in his own way. The greater part of his work may be forgotten, as the greater part of most men's work will be forgotten, but in the best of Lindsay there appears to exist a nameless quality that vanished cave-dwellers

would have understood, and that unborn sophatics will accept.



*Courtesy of The Macmillan Company*

*Vachel Lindsay*

*Photograph of a bust by Adrian Voisin*

## In Memory of Vachel Lindsay\*

SARA TEASDALE

"Deep in the ages," you said, "Deep in the ages,"  
And "To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name"—  
You are deep in the ages now, deep in the ages,  
You whom the world could not break, nor the years tame.

Fly out, fly on, eagle that is not forgotten,  
Fly straight to the innermost light, you who loved sun in your eyes—  
Free of the fret, free of the weight of living,  
Bravest among the brave and gayest among the wise.

\* Reprinted through the courtesy of the author, THE SATURDAY  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE, and the Macmillan Company.

# Vachel Lindsay in the Schools

FREDERIC G. MELCHER  
Editor, *The Publishers' Weekly*  
New York City

**O**F the many broadsides by which Vachel Lindsay expressed himself in print from time to time there was none more characteristic than the one which was first called "A Letter for Your Wicked Private Ear Only" and later appeared as "The Kind of a Visit I Like to Make."

As a traveler who had been welcomed in every state of the Union and in every type of community, he had a dread of perfunctory lecturing of being welcomed at 3:30 P. M., given his fee at 4:30 and delivered to the nearest train. When he visited a town, he preferred to make a day of it and wanted to have some personal conductor who would take him from one appearance to

another, a librarian or teacher or an old friend and correspondent. If this engagement was for the evening, the day provided opportunity for him to visit the schools, and such an opportunity he never neglected.

Such a joyful day I remember a dozen years ago when Mr. Lindsay had accepted an invitation to speak in a literary course at Montclair, New Jersey. I had known Lindsay when I lived in Indianapolis, had had many happy hours when he came visiting from

Springfield, and on one good evening had had the pleasure of bringing together Lindsay and Masefield, Masefield who was a couple of years later to welcome the American to a platform of honor at Oxford University. I still preserve copies of his "Rhymes to be Traded for Bread," with which he purchased his food on the Santa Fé Trail, and the broadside "Proclamation of the Gospel of Beauty," which he read to any audience that he could

gather together on that and other famous trips.

In his acceptance of the invitation to Montclair he sent along, with his whimsical personal comment, his command for an all-day guide. This, of course, was an opportunity too pleasant to forego, and



*Herbert Georg Studio, Springfield*

*Vachel Lindsay, Mrs. Lindsay, Nicholas, and Susan*

I began the day at the old Hotel Brevoort in New York, where I found him perched at the foot of his bed, reading comfortably. "Do you know," he declaimed as I entered the room, "I have just found out that I, of all people, have had past expenses here subsidized by the liquor interests. A room in this hotel which I have used for so many years now costs me a dollar more a day, and the explanation they give is that they have to make up for the loss of the business of their

bar." And then he shook forth one of his resonant laughs with which he could make any room seem small.

After breakfast, we journeyed together to Glen Ridge, neighbor of Montclair, and had the first of the day's meetings. It was evident that Lindsay was going to be in fine fettle, happy, buoyant, confident. My favorite poems were coming forth with a resonance and power that carried the new audience of young people with him. After lunch, we went to the Montclair High School before another audience just to his liking. The principal had asked me to come to the morning assembly the day before and give the school some idea of what Vachel Lindsay stood for and what his poetry was like, so that when he now appeared they were in the mood for him to play upon.

"A high school audience," he had said to me as we entered the building, "is an audience all in one temper. Either you have them all or you have none. There is no half-way. When they are all with you, a hall of young people makes the most inspiring audience a poet can have." The assembly began happily. The president of the class called for the school yell and three rousing cheers for Vachel Lindsay, which were given to the echo. "You all must know," Lindsay said as he stepped forward after this introduction, "that a good school cheer is one of the most difficult things to write. Perhaps some of you have tried it and know. To be successful, it must play upon the fundamental emotions of all. It must awaken, thrill, exalt. There was once an American who knew every trick of this art of playing upon the emotions. That was P. T. Barnum. To help him play upon the crowds he invented an organ played by steam and called it the calliope. I have wanted to put into a poem some of that spirit of the circus when the calliope is playing upon the people and the crowd is surging into the time-worn benches. I put that feeling into a poem called 'The Kallyope Yell,' which starts like this:

Proud men  
Eternally  
Go about,  
Slander me,  
Call me the Calliope'  
Sizz...   ...  
Fizz...   ...  
  
Music of the mob am I  
Circus day's tremendous cry:—  
I am the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope.  
.....  
Sizz, fizz."

Thus he had swiftly gripped the interest of the group in the sphere of their own interests, and the strangeness and the power of the rhythms carried them to ecstasy.

Rhythm of Niagara's roar,  
Voicing planet, star and moon,  
Shrieking of the better years,  
Prophet-singers will arise,  
Prophets coming after me  
Sing my song in softer guise  
With more delicate surprise,  
I am but the Pioneer  
Voice of Democracy;  
I am the gutter dream,  
I am the golden dream,  
Singing science, singing steam.  
I am the Kallyope, Kallyope, Kallyope.

Thus he proceeded to one poem after another, never losing the interest of the audience for a moment, carrying them off on the "Santa Fé Trail," bringing them in chanting unison with him to "John Brown's Body," and "Simon Legree," stirred them with "The Eagle That is Forgotten," never stopping for poems of a lighter vein, as this bond of enthusiasm was too precious to be broken, until finally he reached a glorious climax with the impressive intoning of "General Booth Enters Into Heaven":

"Oh, shout Salvation! It was good to see  
Kings and Princes by the Lamb set free  
The banjos rattled and the tamborines  
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of Queens.

He saw King Jesus. They were face to face,  
And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

I was seeing an audience of one thousand boys and girls bound together in a unit of emotion and exaltation as I have never seen it before or since.

From the high school we went to the afternoon session of an elementary school, using the walk in the open air as an opportunity to recover from the high tension of that great assembly. "An elementary school," said Lindsay, "is quite a different thing from a high school. The room will have as many moods as there are children with here a group and there a group following this interest or that." Deftly and understandingly he adapted his ways to the new audience and had them as completely under the sway of his poems as the high school. Here he read them the Moon poems and "The Lion" and "The Little Turtle," and how they did enjoy "The Mysterious Cat" and "The Potatoes' Dance." Finally he ended on "The Sea Serpent Chaney," and in two minutes they all knew the chorus and were chanting with him vociferously.

This is the voice of the sand  
(The sailors understand)  
There is far more sea than sand,  
There is far more sea than land,  
Yo.... ho, yo.... ho."

In what hundreds of schools Vachel Lindsay must have made similar friends. Every year when Book Week comes around I enjoy an invitation from the schools in Montclair to go back with them and talk about the books we love, and each time the opportunity resolves itself into poetry reading, and, after selections from one beloved source or another and from this anthology or that, I find myself always ending up with some of Lindsay's poems because they do so surely belong to group readings and to the auditoriums of our schools.

It was one of the satisfactions of his life, which, though ended so much too soon, was

singularly complete in many ways, that he had in the last few years been able to publish his selection of the poems he had found were the favorites with children, *JOHNNY APPLESEED AND OTHER POEMS* and also the *SELECTED POEMS*, an arrangement more suitable for his high school or college friends. It was a great satisfaction to him, too, that he had his own voice and chanting preserved in the records taken at Columbia University just before his death so that the cadences which so moved audiences can be recaptured by those who love to give his poems. He had the great comfort, too, of having his own two lovely children, Susan and Nicky, to whom he could leave these poems as a memory and as a precious inheritance.

Poetry has taken a new place in our schools in the last decade with the coming into use of poetry of the present day which the children love and understand, and to this new verse no one of our contemporaries has made more valued contributions and contributions more loved by the children than Vachel Lindsay.

"Why do you seek the sun  
In your bubble-crown ascending?  
Your chariot will melt in mist.  
Your crown will have an ending.

Nay, sun is but a bubble,  
Earth is a whiff of foam—  
To my caves on the coast of Thule  
Each night I call them home.

Thence Faiths blow forth to angels  
And loves blow forth to men—  
They break and turn to nothing  
And I make them whole again.  
On crested waves of chaos  
I ride them back reborn.  
New stars I bring at evening  
For those that burst at morn.  
My soul is the wind of Thule  
And evening is the sign—  
The sun is but a bubble,  
A fragile child of mine.\*

\* "The Bubble Crown," from *COLLECTED POEMS* of Vachel Lindsay. Published by The Macmillan Company.

# Lindsay and the Child's Approach to Art

HAZELTON SPENCER

Johns Hopkins University  
Baltimore, Maryland

No section of the public will, I suppose, feel the loss of Vachel Lindsay quite so much as the English teachers. Ever since he became a national figure with the publication of "General William Booth Enters into Heaven" in *POETRY* for January, 1913, he had counted them among his most stalwart supporters. His hold on the schools was never stronger than in his final years. In that fact he gloried, for he believed it insured the perpetuation of his audience. The reason is not far to seek. To the English teacher, fighting the daily uphill battle against juvenile Philistinism, trying to infuse with the joy of imaginative literature a race of children whose parents are addicted to the cheap weekly magazine, the sensational motion picture, jazz, and the radio, the appearance in the local high school auditorium of that incarnation of poetic vitality which was Vachel Lindsay became a spiritual reenforcement of incalculable value. Partly this poet's direct educational availability arose from his insistence that poetry must be heard, not seen; partly it lay in the applicability of his artistic theorem to the life of the American people.

All the teacher can possibly do with a great deal of the highest poetry is to assure the more imaginative child that if he keeps reading it for years the beautiful sounds will at long last become more beautiful by conveying a meaning that only the experienced mind can comprehend. It is not idle, for example, to let the music of the great love-poetry fall on childish ears, though if its beauty is then perceived it can at best be only as through a glass darkly. Young or old, no one can fully realize the greatness of Miss Millay's sonnets who has not suffered deeply and known why he suffered. *FATAL INTERVIEW* must remain

distant music for the most gifted child, and to the ordinary child would not be music at all.

Now, in the poetry of Lindsay there is more of that kind of music than some of his critics—I will not suggest why—have guessed. But a great deal of his work, more than in the case of most poets, is so directly constructed out of facts of American history and geography that children can be led through it to understand that an artist need not necessarily intoxicate or drug himself to create the icy caverns of Kubla Khan, but looking around him at the same things every child has seen may be able to translate them into significant beauty. Any youngster worth educating at all can understand "The Santa Fé Trail"—not only delighting in the racket parts and responding to its stirring rhythms and changes of pace, but recognizing that the artist, watching the cars tear westward, really does see the United States go by, that he lets the grasshopper eat a hole in his shirt because poet and grasshopper are more like each other than either is like people who have to spend their lives buying and selling or tending machines, and that raw as the machine age may be and raucous as may be the horns that in this poem proclaim it, the Rachel Jane is not yet quite defeated by them.

Lindsay's poetry is like the man—direct, outspoken, uncompromising. That is the kind of poetry children love best, for they hate a literary pussy-footer. In their innocence they suppose that art is more concerned with beauty than with ugliness, that a poet uses words to express, not conceal his meaning, that obscurity in verse implies just as bad writing as it does in prose, that the great poets have flung color profusely onto their palates, and that great art is not niggardly, anaemic, or

finessing. Lindsay was never one of those of whom the satirist alleged that "In rain and buttermilk they dip their pen." There is a time for robustness and there is a time for attenuation and supersubtlety. But the time for the latter is not when children are being first apprised of the existence of a new and glorious world of art. Among all the contemporary poets of America and Britain I can think of none more ready to the hand of the teacher who is attempting to perform for the inexperienced minds entrusted to him that tremendously important introduction.

The reality of beauty and a modern conception of the relation of art to life and the value of art for life have first been powerfully brought to the attention of thousands upon thousands of school children through Lindsay's recitals. During his years on the platform he undoubtedly chanted to a larger audience than any other man in the history of poetry directly addressed. Hating mechanization as he did, he remains none the less indebted to one of the triumphs of the machine age in his dependence henceforth on machinery for direct contact with his hearers. Only a few months before Lindsay's death Professor Cabell Greet of Columbia University, well known for his interest in the mechanical reproduction of American speech, made forty records of Lindsay's recitation of a number of his poems. They are not yet commercially available, but all who care about American art have reason to be grateful to Professor Greet. The records were made only in the very nick of time.

The importance of preserving Lindsay's vocal performance of these works can hardly be overestimated. The printed poems are in many cases scarcely more than imperfect scores, even when, as in some of the great set-pieces, marginal directions for tempo, volume, and coloring are set down. Lindsay conceived of the poet, not as a juggler with pen and ink, but as a bard and prophet chanting, orating, shouting, whispering, singing, persuading. Sometimes a line is intended to be sung to a tune conventional and definite

enough to be recorded in ordinary musical notation. More often the vocal tune is incapable of it. Lindsay, like many another true bard, was full of theories about his art; one of his pet notions was that for every verbal phrase there is a unique and inevitable tune. With characteristic optimism the poet believed that every sensitive reader can discover the tune if he reads and rereads. But all who ever heard Lindsay speak-chant-sing "The Chinese Nightingale" will agree that as a complete work of art that poem would have been lost to the world by its author's death, had it not been preserved by Mr. Greet. And there are many poems which, unlike that masterpiece, have almost no significance as they lie on the printed page, but come to life and are beautiful and meaningful when chanted by the composer. The phonograph companies are doubtless loth to undertake new enterprises in these parlous times; but they certainly do not know their own business if they remain ignorant that while the radio can beat them in certain fields it can not touch them in others. I hope that from the schools will come so imperative a demand for the Lindsay records that some commercial company will find it impossible to remain supine.

Once the records are available, which will be as soon as the English teachers voice their requirements, they can be used in two ways. Their most obvious employment is simply as a reproduction of the poet's recitals. But an enormous extension of their usefulness, especially with younger children, can be made if the teacher has or can acquire the knack of getting up the "poem games." This delightful and for young children immensely valuable form of indoor art-sport grew out of Lindsay's reversion to the dawn of Greek art, when music, poetry, and dancing were less specialized than now. In such poem games as "The Potatoes' Dance" and "King Solomon," as well as in many pieces not specifically subtitled as poem games, Lindsay successfully blends a dramatic situation, an exquisite lyricism almost compelling song, and a definite pattern for imitative choreography.

# The Lindsay Records

WILLIAM CABELL GREET

Barnard College, Columbia University  
New York City

**T**HIS morning I played the Lindsay records for two old friends of the poet, who had grown up with him in Springfield, Illinois—the town hallowed by Lindsay and Masters no less than by Lincoln and Altgeld. It is hard to describe the feeling that you have on hearing a dead friend speak again through the phonograph. To hear a dead poet recite magnificently his immortal poems is an experience that stirs the soul. The gentle and humorous Lindsay singing for little children "A Dirge for a Righteous Kitten," "The Proud Mysterious Cat," "Chippie-munk," "Crows," "Yet Gentle Will the Griffin Be," "The Moon's the North Wind's Cookie." The friend of boys and girls singing "The Traveler Heart," "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes," "When I Was a Tree," "The Kallyope Yell," "In Praise of Johnny Appleseed," "The Ghost of the Buffaloes." The great lyricist singing "The Chinese Nightingale," "Dulcenia del Tobosa," "Kansas," "The Jazz of This Hotel." The merry buffoon, in amazing metrics and with humane sympathy and insight, singing "The Congo," "The Booker Washington Trilogy," "Daniel," "General William Booth," and "John L. Sullivan the Strong Boy of Boston." The satirist and idealist singing "The Virginians are Coming Again," "Gypsy Fiddles," "Every Soul is a Circus." The unequalled chronicler of the American spirit singing "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan."

There are other poems, too. The collection is a reservoir for the lover of poetry. I never play the records without experiencing again the thrilling, choking, elevating, serene emotions of a powerful aesthetic experience. Thank God that Lindsay came to my laboratory and asked me to make these records. He

had been rebuffed by the great commercial concerns, by one in a very cruel manner. The art of recording for the phonograph is over fifty years old. It has been developed and perfected by the richest quasi-public service corporations in the world. But only now, for the first time, on the death of a great poet do sufficient records remain to carry on his work of creating truth and beauty for us and for our children. After fifty years, this is finally accomplished through the energy and vision of an "impractical" poet, and the inexpensive research apparatus of a professor of English—without the perfection of machinery which is at the service of every ephemeral movie, without benefit of the technical experience of recording engineers. I wish that Lindsay had used the satiric force that we hear in "Bryan" and "The Virginians are Coming Again" to blast the great companies that control electrical communication and amusements, who seem to care only for the cheap theatre and the business application of science, who have done nothing to preserve our cultural heritage, insulting one of our significant poets. They remain indifferent to the importance of the arts of recording in the field of education, and still prate of ten and twenty thousand dollar theatre equipment to the school teacher who wants to make records of his students. So the school teacher—three years ago two teachers at Columbia University, today many, many more—go to two or three small companies that have to exist without great monopolies and are therefore willing to listen to the teacher's needs and to try and give him recording apparatus that will do its job at a price he can pay. But the small company is severely handicapped, sometimes

(Continued on page 128)

# My Tow-Headed Pupil, Vachel Lindsay

SUSAN E. WILCOX  
Springfield, Illinois

"WHO is that tow-headed youth with the honest gray eyes," I asked myself as my eyes traveled over the forty-odd sophomores in my English class. "What an extraordinary forehead! How those beetling prominences over the eyebrows contradict the lack of color in his whole person! Why does his mother dress him in gray?" When I called the roll, the youngster of the beetling brow answered, "Vachel Lindsay." The name Lindsay was familiar for his father was a well-known physician in Springfield, Illinois, and his mother a leader in the small intellectual group in the city and both were prominent and active members of the First Church of the Disciples.

Lindsay took a passionate interest in drawing. Unfortunately a high school of that day offered few facilities for developing such a talent as his. He was a member of my botany class—this was before the days of specialization. His plates were so beautifully done that they drew high grades regardless of the explanations that accompanied them. Just after he was out of college he referred to his pleasure in botany and added mischievously, "You might have made a scientist out of me." "Not in a thousand years," I rejoined. "You know that you owe your success in that course to the fact that the teacher liked pictures and was not a scientist."

Naturally Lindsay was an excellent student in English. During his second year in high school we read "The Vision of Sir Launfal." He greatly enjoyed most of the poem, but he protested against the theology. He took particular exception to the passage beginning "The Holy Supper is kept indeed," insisting that this was not what the church meant by the sacrament; then he expounded it as taught by

the Christian Church. When he was only a sophomore he read books that for the most part would have been Greek to his classmates. When he was absorbing Carlyle's FRENCH REVOLUTION he would make little visits to my desk to share his enthusiasm with me.

It was not till his senior year that I saw any of Lindsay's own poetry. This was when he was in that stage that so many talented boys pass through, an enthusiastic devotion to Poe. From this came his first version of "The Battle" in which "Love fought with a withered



Vachel Lindsay at sixteen.

Hag." This he says was his "first picture drawn in words." For several years following his high school course he wrote verses only occasionally and most of them as commentaries on pictures.

Just before his graduation I asked Vachel about his plans for the future. His face grew grave as he answered, "If I were an orphan, I should be an artist, but I'm not and so I'm going to college and be a doctor." This proclivity for art was innate; all his early dreams were of using his pencil rather than his pen.

Because he was a dutiful son Lindsay went to college. There he stuck it out till the middle of his junior year when his parents, realizing that he would never make a physician, gave their consent to his entering the Chicago Art Institute. He studied there three years and then a year in Chase's art classes in New York. His drawings were as individual, fantastic, and mystifying as the verses which he continued to produce. I recall a group of Philistines gathered about one of them that he called the Soul of the Spider. Vainly we looked for some suggestion of that familiar insect. We were not helped any, as we tried to put the drawing right side up, by his cheerful remark, "It really doesn't make any difference which way you hold it." We used to dub those cobwebby drawings "The Lindsay lines and spots."

I think the most difficult as well as the most productive years of Vachel Lindsay's life were those that followed his first two journeys afoot. It is no easy matter for any artist to make an adjustment to his environment; it was doubly hard for Lindsay. It had been hard for him as a child—not that he was unsocial. On the contrary he dearly loved companionship, but his playmates felt that he held interests that they did not share. One so unfortunate as "to be different" in a standardized world is made to pay both in childhood and in maturity.

Lindsay tried desperately to get a foothold in the busy commercial world. Under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. at the magnificent salary of \$10 a week he conducted groups of art students through the Metropolitan Art Gallery, a work for which he was eminently fitted by taste and training; but the "Y" after a year discontinued these expeditions, though

the art students were most enthusiastic about their tutor.

Vachel answered every "ad" that held out any promise. He besieged publishers with his just completed book, *ALADDIN'S LAMP*, hand printed and beautifully illustrated, containing the germs of most of his later poems, but the publishers would have none of it. How many evenings I've listened entranced while the poet read to me from this storehouse of beauty and original ideas! He destroyed the book when his mother was grieving that art was leading the entire family astray!

He disliked to be dependent on his parents; in consequence he went shabbily clothed. He was shut off from contacts that would have stimulated and spurred him to write when his mind was most open and his imagination most fresh. "Good movie, tonight," he would say as he appeared at my door, "if you have the cash—I haven't; let's go," and we went. Himself generous to a fault, he would spend his last cent for a friend. All his early work he published at his own expense and distributed to all interested. *THE TRAMP'S EXCUSE* and *THE VILLAGE MAGAZINE* were thus published. He bound in covers made of pieces of wall paper *THE TREE OF LAUGHING BELLS*, and *THE LAST SONG OF LUCIFER*; these he gave away.

When he sold his first poem, the one written to accompany the picture he had made of the Queen of Bubbles, in gala spirits he produced his ten dollar bill and suggested that we celebrate. We did in a mild orgy of ice cream and coffee.

During this time of much neglect and some snubbing, the poet launched his Ruskin Revival in which he first set forth in six lectures his gospel of beauty. A mere handful, faithful friends, attended. I am glad I did not miss hearing Vachel read Ruskin's rounded periods.

How frequently he entertained me by reciting poetry; he knew reams of it by heart. Among his favorites were the Pre-Raphaelites whose blend of painting with poetry had for

him an especial appeal. Swinburne's musical measures charmed him. He frequently chanted to me, "When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces." I can well believe he charmed with its rhythm the ears of Kansas farmhands. Still his melancholy crooning of Swinburne's "Ballad of Burdens" echoes in my ears.

How many of our social gatherings Vachel's talent has enlivened. He loved to be with the small group of friends at our Christmas parties. When we divided into two troupes to pantomime the thrilling story of Grimm's Seven Brothers, it was Vachel who planned the scene in the castle garden where the queen mother hangs on the line the seven shirts of her long lost sons. From newspapers he cut seven shirts, scalloped, fringed, and embroidered, ranging from one that would have been roomy for Samson to the tiny garment that would have pinched a baby.

I have heard people score Lindsay's mannerisms in his recitals as affected. The charge is quite untrue. He always recited though he had only one listener, with his head thrown back and his half-closed eyes cast heavenward in a chant whose pitch and tempo varied with his emotions. Watching him thus lost to all that was passing around him, I sometimes fancied that he was hypnotized by his own ideation.

During this period of which I write, a period that ended with his mother's death, Lindsay was intimately associated with a group of persons bound together by their faith in the single tax. It was not their economic theories that drew Vachel to them, but rather their sincere ardor for civic righteousness. These friends besought him to write a poem on the single tax. When he read them the charming lyric "A Net To Snare The Moonlight" they said, "That's very pretty but what has it to do with the single tax?" The poet answered laughingly, "This is the soul of the single tax."

To Springfield High School Vachel was a loyal friend to the day of his death. Many and many a free recital he has given. He

taught the pupils to chant with him. They often criticized his antics, scoffed his strangeness, but invariably for days the halls and classrooms reechoed to their chanted chorus of "The Sea Serpent Chantey," or "Every Soul is a Circus":

"For every soul is a circus—  
And every mind is a tent  
And every heart is a sawdust ring  
Where the circling race is spent."

By his flying beauty swayed, they chanted to the lilting melody he set:

"It is the cross-roads  
Resurrection  
Parade."

Pupils attended in large numbers his last recital given in Springfield just a week before his death and joined with the rest of the audience in the swinging refrain "What did you see in Palestine?" For several years he gathered weekly in his home a group of high school boys who had showed some literary taste. With them he considered certain parts of literature, giving them freely of his best.

The zeal with which he pled the case of the supersensitive, gifted child revealed tomes about his own early suffering. Every seed of talent he besought teachers to preserve and develop.

The name of Dante is no more closely interwoven with Florence than is Vachel Lindsay's with Springfield. Here he was born, here he lived for the greater part of his life, and here he died. Homely little city of the Middle West, how he glorified you! When others saw only shabby buildings and smoking chimneys he saw great censers swinging over Springfield as the city received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not blind to your sordid greed and your crass stupidity, in you the city of his discontent he saw the "City magical." To him came a whisper from the grass.

"Romance, Romance is here, No Hindu town  
Is quite so strange, No citadel of brass  
By Sinbad found held half such love and hate."

# Lindsay as the Poet Uncle

CATHERINE F. WAKEFIELD  
Belmont, Massachusetts

WHEN my sister and I first came from our home in China to visit our grandparents in America, I was four and she was two years old and neither of us spoke very much English. That naturally rather complicated matters as none of our relatives spoke Chinese, but Vachel, for whom our private family name was always "Uncle Boy," took an especial interest in us and assumed the responsibilities of entertainment committe during our stay. Long before we forgot our Chinese and became respectable American citizens, Uncle Boy had become a bosom pal.

He introduced a special feature into the day's proceedings—a ritual which we observed religiously each morning just after breakfast. We three would get excused early from the table and then parade around the dining-room and on into the old-fashioned parlor chanting the "Sea Serpent Chantey." When we were alone in the parlor, we would act out "King Solomon" and other poem-dances, with all of us joining in lustily on the choruses. Martha and I loved the choruses of such adult poems as the "Congo," "King Solomon," and "The Sea Serpent Chantey" because, although the words weren't particularly interesting, there was a very definite rhythm and music about the verses—music that can actually be expressed in notes and measures. We also loved to chant the refrains to "The Potatoes' Dance," "The King of Yellow Butterflies," "A Doll's Arabian Nights," and "Daniel" among other poems. But "King Solomon" was the most fun for singing and acting; Uncle Boy would be the Men's Leader and Martha and I would be the Women's Leader and we'd all three be the Congregation. Uncle Boy would prompt us at all the

strategic points until, after not very many mornings, we could do it all by ourselves. Most of Uncle Boy's poetry was a communal experience: we either sang or danced with him—it wasn't something that he recited to an audience that sat still and listened. We didn't associate poetry with writing but with singing. Until I was about ten, I thought of poetry as dancing and games; I didn't know until then that Uncle Boy wrote books, and I remember that I was rather shocked and embarrassed to learn that there was an author in the family.

As for poetry that appealed to us for its intellectual content rather than its rhythm and music, our three favorite poems were "The Lion," "The Grasshopper," and "The Little Turtle." The last verse was our "favoritest." It was written in honor of a most dignified turtle who lived in a tub on our back porch until he heard the poem, but that was the last straw, and in protest against our undue flippancy, he fled with all his worldly goods. We never found him. Still, we'd rather have lost him than our favorite rhyme.

On rainy days sometimes, Uncle Boy would amuse us by drawing us pictures. He would scrawl our initials in the middle of a piece of paper and then we'd turn the paper around at all possible angles until we recognized a potential cabbage or moth or pansy. Then Uncle Boy would add a series of flourishes to his original scrawl until, lo and behold! there would appear the most fantastic (though still recognizable) cabbage or moth or pansy we'd ever seen. Sometimes Uncle Boy would make up a little jingle about the picture he'd drawn. Some of his better known poems, like "The Queen of Bubbles," and "The Tree of Laughing Bells," were written in just this way

for pictures that he'd done first. I've been trying to find some of the pictures that he did for us, but most of them are still back in China. However, in the fly leaves of one of Milt Gross's more ridiculous funny-books, I found this inscription, which was done for Martha when she was rather older. We had just finished an absurdly lightheaded discussion of reincarnation when Vachel wrote:

"In my previous incarnation I was a baby elephant in Central Africa and went to a circus with my mama elephant. At the circus they showed us all kinds of men, white, blue, brown, and black, all eating corn and straw and carefully roped in. I

begged my mama for some peanuts to feed the black pickaninnies. Well, we bought some peanuts from a chimpanzee and when I had reached the place where the black boys were I had eaten up every peanut and they were green peanuts and so I died from eating green peanuts and that was the last time I died. Do not eat green peanuts when you go to the circus.

Lovingly,  
Your Uncle Boy."

And on the opposite page, to point further the sober moral, there was a picture of a baby elephant musing over a bag of peanuts.



### LINDSAY AND THE CHILD'S APPROACH TO ART

(Continued from page 121)

Here and there throughout the country English teachers and dancing teachers have already found that by assigning the best voices to chanting the poems, aided of course by a chorus of all hands on the refrains, a more suggestive setting than pure music affords any save the most imaginative children is provided for expression in terms of bodily movement. It is, for example, perfectly clear to the child that when King Solomon says he "gave each son four hundred prancing ponies", and the audience responds, "We were the ponies," the dancing should suggest as spiritedly as possible the proud cavorting of these royal animals, and that when the dancers hear that "Daniel's tender sweetheart" was "gliding and lovely as a ship on the sea" their movements should be correspondingly graceful. When Lindsay's own chanting can be put on the gymnasium or classroom phonograph and the children can chime in with the precise cadences of the refrains, the poem

games will be all the more thrilling. What could be more effective as a means of initiating young children into active contact with poetic beauty and teaching them to get rid of self-consciousness in the expression of it?

As his journey drew to a close, the painful journey of the artist who could not compromise, Lindsay, though to make a living he had to pursue it, felt an increasing distaste for the conventional trail of the national lecturer. Stodgy poetry societies, tea-parties, and lionizing were no less hateful to him than the early neglect which he never ceased to resent. But he felt differently about the schools. The parents might be hopeless Babbitts, unworthy even of positive damnation, but Lindsay believed in the children. "The Virginians Are Coming Again," he proclaims in one of the most passionate outbursts of his later years. And "These are the darlings of my heart," he cries in "These Are the Young," a poem that should be taken to heart by every teacher

(Continued on page 131)

# John Mistletoe Remembers Lindsay\*

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Saturday Review of Literature

**O**N one occasion Vachel Lindsay was guest of honor and recited to a large meeting and great applause. Afterward, Lindsay and Mistletoe and some others were going down Broadway. All Vachel's elocutionary glands were well stimulated; like the man in O. Henry's "Gentle Graftor" he could feel millions of synonyms and parts of speech rising in him and he badly needed vent for them. He was genuinely drunk; not with wine, for Vachel is an abstainer, but with the pure excitement of a poet. "Look here," said Mistletoe, when it became apparent that our guest was really suffering from congestion, "we've simply got to find a place where he can spel some more." We were then near the Childs restaurant at 32nd Street and Sixth Avenue where several of us often had our frugal lunch. The big basement room would be almost empty at that hour (mid-afternoon) so thither we went. A word to the manager, who was puzzled but good-natured. We ordered tea and toast, and in that

alabaster cellar, to our own group, a few amazed patrons and a number of white-robed waitresses, Vachel ejaculated the resounding lines of "The Congo"—

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room he began, and Childs' albino tiling echoed it handsomely. I never heard him do it better, and it was a thrill for us all. "Childs' Garden of Verses," Vachel remarked as we left. He had always a pleasant solemnity of puns. Once, in the EVENING POST era, Mistletoe took him to a little lunchroom on Vesey Street where several of the editors used to eat together. It was a very masculine place, rarely entered by ladies. This was an agreeable novelty to Vachel, just in from a long tour of women's clubs. He surveyed the thick china, the large bowls of bean soup, the solid slabs of roast beef, the strong atmosphere of smoke and heat and clatter. "This is a regular he-man's place," he observed. Then, tilting back his head and squinting at us in that characteristic pose (not unlike the lions in front of the New York Public Library) "and I don't mean Felicia Hemans."

\* Reprinted from JOHN MISTLETOE by Christopher Morley through courtesy of the author and of the publishers, Doubleday, Doran and Company.



## THE LINDSAY RECORDS

(Continued from page 122)

by lack of experience and always by inability to obtain important parts which are the sole patent right of the large industrial pools. In this case the educator, the students, and the public, which has allowed these patents and monopolies, suffer. I, for example, am unable to get a good two-button microphone, without bootlegging it or equivocating as to

the fact that I intend to use it in making records of our culture for a university library, in gathering evidence of American dialects, and promoting new methods of teaching speech and foreign languages.

Without help of any corporation that should help us, we will issue a commercial edition of the Vachel Lindsay records.

# The Whole Lindsay

WITTER BYNNER  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

IT is difficult for me to write, as I have been asked to do, concerning Vachel Lindsay's child-poems. Perhaps the very difficulty makes the attempt worth while.

The trouble is that I have never much cared about Lindsay's poems written for children. I have understood and sympathized with his motive, and I have no doubt that many children enjoy the verses he set down for them. Such children as have heard him chant them must have been, with him, enchanted. The spell of his presence and voice could at times almost make his lesser poems sound as good as his masterpieces. Nevertheless one may regret that he indulged his genius too often in trivial exercises, that he was too often misled from magic to the mediocre.

There is definitely a kind of genius which can put nonsense into magical form—Lewis Carroll's, for instance. There is a talent, almost amounting to genius, which can do for children what Gilbert did for grown-ups—A. A. Milne's, for instance. And now and then there have been poets writing as admirably in one vein for the young as in another for the old. Robert Louis Stevenson was such a case, though the popularity of his *CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSE*, it seems to me, has obscured the superior quality of much of his other verse.

Lindsay was of quite other stuff than the stuff of these three men. From the beginning, he was a child and spoke to the child in the hearts of his hearers. His responses to life were those of a child unfrightened by growing up. The Golden City which he wished his town to become was a town laid out in toy-blocks by an imaginative child. The Negro, whom he felt and echoed in his

"Congo" was the Negro a wise child would feel when brought under the spell of Negro rhythm, charm and fate. And his "Chinese Nightingale" sings forever, against growing maturity and consciousness, the dawn of romantic love. So does his earlier "General Booth" ascend to heaven in the eyes of a child listening from the curbstone to the impressive emotion and simple rhythm of the Salvation Army. Even his "Lincoln" is the Lincoln of a thoughtful schoolchild, as all his flesh and blood heroes—except perhaps Altgeldt—are the heroes of a boy dreaming in a schoolroom.

In no whit when I say these things do I disparage Vachel Lindsay.

I would to God there were more modern poets who could bring a childlike faith and fervor to their song of life. Despite a momentary fad, among critics and pretentious laymen, favoring hyper-sophistication in both poetic content and form, the time is small now compared with the time when Lindsay struck its note. All the intellectual conceits in the world, all the inwrought mannerisms, all the fundamental faithlessness of the men and women who have turned poetry into this or that school of empty complication, all the egotism and blind gush of those who have made of it a mere sexual noise, are a sad drop in poetry from the singing child-heart of Lindsay. And this is why I have not liked those poems of his which are intentionally and technically childish. It would have been better had he trusted that young children as well as grown-up children would have responded to him at his best and richest. Very early in a child of any imagination, of any rhythm, of any future, surely there must

(Continued on page 181)

# Lindsay in Bohemia

GEORGE M. RICHARDS  
New Canaan, Connecticut

**R**HYTHM is popularly supposed to be the peculiar discovery of the younger generation with Paul Whiteman, perhaps, as its Edison.

Yet in the early years of this century, the little club of young fellows who were planning their assaults on the towers of Manhattan and betting on who would be the first to "push over the Flatiron Building," were as keenly conscious of its existence as the most dogmatic devotee of Gershwin.

Newspaper reporters, real estate salesmen, bank clerks, artists, music students, all of them spent a part of their weekly pittance at the Colonial Music Hall or that theatre on Columbus Circle where the "Wizard of Oz" and "Babes in Toyland" ran perennially. The pivot of the club was Vachel Lindsay, then a student at the New York School of Art under William M. Chase and Robert Henri. At that time none of us knew, least of all himself, whether the art that was struggling to find expression within him would develop at the easel and drawing board or in the sphere of letters.

All of us, however, were agreed that "Vach" couldn't possibly carry a tune. Apparently he was tone-deaf, but only rigorous measures could persuade him of it. Rhythm was in him and must come out, so that it was he who made us poetry-conscious then as he made America in later life. Even the most hardened Philistine of the club would listen to him in fascination as he chanted Swinburne in that inimitable manner of his.

What Swinburne had to say mattered little—the cadence and music of the verse mattered much.

Perhaps an earnest inquisitor of the sort

that writes the commentaries on the works of genius which form the larger and denser parts of editions of the classics may be able to trace the influence of Algernon Charles here and there in Lindsay's poems. Certainly no poet was ever more himself alone than Lindsay.

But none of us can forget the vision of strange worlds that followed as we used to walk with him down Broadway, Vachel striding along hatless, pale tousled hair flying in the breeze, chanting those singing classical odes at the top of his lungs with entire indifference to the astonishment of the passers-by and the acute embarrassment of his more conventionally minded chums.

This, of course, smacks of the consciously eccentric pose of the hardened publicity seeker. Nothing was farther from Lindsay's intention. He chanted Swinburne on Broadway because walking down Broadway made him feel like singing, and since he was not allowed to sing, Swinburne was the best substitute.

As to publicity, we were all agreed that he needed nothing else to become famous. Two or three of us who were connected more or less loosely with the newspaper game went so far as to concoct a plot to bring the poet to public attention. Some incident of a dramatic and startling nature was to be perpetrated in the lobby of the Colonial. The best minds decided that Vachel should begin reciting his poems and, gradually working himself into the frenzy which comes with divine intoxication, should throw a fit as the climax. That would be good for a half a column in the morning papers. The only stumbling-block to the execution of this extremely intelligent scheme was Lindsay himself, who absolutely

refused to throw a fit for any one at any time. Perhaps the Left Bank could have exhibited a more thoroughly regimented Bohemia than

that in which we lived, and Greenwich Village a more sophisticated one, but never was there one more sincere and enthusiastic.

### MY TOW-HEADED PUPIL, VACHEL LINDSAY

(Continued from page 125)

Because he felt that a city should have its symbol, he offered a prize for the best design of a flag for Springfield, and the one chosen hangs in the public library today.

Five years ago he returned from his sojourn in Spokane to take up his residence again in his father's house, the old Lindsay home. He was welcomed back by a big public luncheon. At the last he had conquered indifference and misunderstandings. Springfield felt their poet had really come home.

People who had scoffed now revered; those who had been cold now glowed with pride in the city's poet. At the time of his death friends here had under consideration a plan to ease the financial burden that rested heavy upon him. They were too late to help the poet. They have raised a memorial fund for his wife and children. In the near future a suitable monument will mark his grave in Oak Ridge Cemetery where the poet sleeps on the hill top not far from Lincoln's tomb.

### LINDSAY AND THE CHILD'S APPROACH TO ART

(Continued from page 127)

who, brought up with a bang by the stone wall that ought to separate every pair of generations, is momentarily appalled at the strangeness of the young crowd on the other side.

In their turn, children responded warmly to the man Lindsay and to his noble chanting. Perhaps they sensed that in some respects he had never ceased to be one of them. Now

that the great heart has stopped and the rich voice is stilled, what of the key that for so many children opened magic casements on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn? To fling wide those windows was Lindsay's special function in the schools. Whether his poetry is to continue to unlock them for another generation of children is for the readers of this journal to decide.

### THE WHOLE LINDSAY

(Continued from page 129)

lie, toward Lindsay's best poems, an intuitive understanding of the sweetness in the poet's young response to life, as well as an ear-beat echoing the primitive rhythms.

Accounting for the weakness of Lindsay's later poems, I believe that he tried in his work to separate the child and the man. Impressed by harmfully intricate praise or dispraise of his quality as both poet and craftsman, he forsook himself. He divided himself into two Lindsays. The Lindsay who must

be a thinker and must write importantly, who must be a technician of parts and must write subtly, he separated from the Lindsay who must be a playboy and who must romp with children like a Father Goose; and he thereby left behind him the whole Lindsay who should have remained a heaven-sent child through all vicissitudes. Had Vachel lived longer, I think that he would have found the whole Lindsay again. If he died divided, he lives whole.

# Vachel Lindsay at the English Council

C. C. CERTAIN

**I**N November, 1928, Vachel Lindsay as my guest, attended the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English in Baltimore, Maryland. Robert Frost was on the program too. Both poets were to speak on the evening of the annual banquet; aside from this, they did not have the same audiences.

Some concern was expressed by the president of the Council lest the two speakers, so totally unlike, should clash in style and method of presentation, to the disadvantage of Robert Frost. But I knew of the devoted following of Lindsay's in the schools and I knew that one so universally liked by teachers and children, especially children, the country over, would make any necessary program adjustment. I did not worry.

I was interested to discover later that Vachel Lindsay himself was much concerned over the situation. It was like him to be thoughtful and considerate of others. His solicitude for Robert Frost was characteristic. He knew what a source of intoxication an audience like that could be to him. He said, "Our temperaments are wholly different—particularly as speakers. I don't want to do anything to disturb Bob. This is really his meeting. I must not steal Bob's thunder. Don't you let me."

At the banquet, Lindsay was presented as the first speaker. He chanted several of his poems, including "The Virginians Are Coming Again," which had first appeared that summer in THE AMERICAN MERCURY for July. The audience responded with great enthusiasm to the surging rhythms of

"Babbitt, your tribe is passing away.  
This is the end of your infamous day.  
The Virginians are coming again."

When Robert Frost spoke, the cadences of Vachel's poems were still ringing in the ears of his hearers. He spoke quietly, and with thoughtful intensity, but when he began to quote his famous "Birches," the lines slipped uneasily from memory, and he had to pick up the little volume from the table and read the poem to the end.

At the close of the meeting, crowds of English teachers pressed around the poets, and besieged Vachel to arrange for speaking engagements in their schools. Several months later, he wrote me, March 7, 1929, "I have just returned home after the longest tour of my life. I thank you for a mighty good time in Baltimore. I am sending under separate cover my Map of the Universe which may be an acknowledgment of a good time, if you get a good time out of it." Then he added, "There is nothing in my eastern tour that remains in my mind more vividly than the charming Baltimore adventure. It was a special favor to have the opportunity for a visit with my old friend, Robert Frost. That conversation with him meant a great deal to me."

Baltimore is a Southern place. I found the South when I went to look for a taxi on my arrival there that November morning in 1928. I was delayed in getting to my hotel because the driver of the only taxi in sight was "across the street eating breakfast" at 10:00 a. m.

I recognized Southern hospitality when the hotel clerk saw my name, and said, "Your friend Vachel Lindsay is here. Came yesterday. We've given him a room directly across from yours."

As a neighbor of Lindsay's I learned something about his habits. He was out most of the time, unless just before a lecture when he

kept close to conserve his energies and emotions. His bed-time was rarely earlier than two a. m., for he had many literary friends in Baltimore to hold him in conversation till that small hour. Even later than that, I could hear him chanting softly but resonantly until he had fallen asleep. In his room, the only evidence of work was the pile of paper slips he used in lecturing. These slips were one and one-half by four and one-half inches—long and narrow. Upon these he usually had written the title of a poem in a large scrawl, and a flourish. He handled his materials neatly; the slips were always stacked nicely.

Scattered helter-skelter on the dresser were a score or so of photographs and snap-shots of the Lindsay family. One was of Susan and Nicholas, posed sweetly and clearly in focus. But not many were so clear. Vachel would appear in one, just barely distinct, with the youngsters capering around and blurring his image in the picture. Mrs. Lindsay would be the center in others. The whole impression was one of rollicking youngsters who would not often stand still long enough for a sharply focused photograph. Vachel would pick up one, and say, "Not so clear but (as he handed it to me) exactly what Sue is like."

The first time he showed me pictures of the children was at the luncheon, just before I introduced him to the audience. He had the usual blurred snap-shots, but one beautifully posed of Susan and Nicholas. When I learned that he called his young son "Nicholas," I asked why he himself was not called Nicholas (his first name) instead of Vachel. He said that he had no choice, and liked Nicholas quite as well. Susan, he said, was given that name because it was such a lovely Southern name, and especially because it could be shortened to "Sue" when she had to be spanked.

I found him excellent company—a voluble and whimsical talker. After an hour and a half at breakfast, the morning following my arrival, he recalled suddenly the luncheon speaking engagement, and declared that he must at once go to his room for quiet and relaxation, because, if he did not guard

against it, he would exhaust his best strength in conversation.

He and H. L. Menken had been together the night before, and had discussed the Eighteenth Amendment, but since Lindsay recalled clearly the cogency of Menken's scintillating arguments against prohibition, and since at two a. m. on his return to his room, he was quite successful in unlocking his door without having to resort to trial and error methods, I am sure that the two of them had in no way offered opposition to it. He said Menken had a German mind in arguing against prohibition, but that there could be no doubt about his (Menken's) success in this argument.

Vachel Lindsay has been called a troubadour. With two open transoms upon the corridor between our rooms, I learned that he was a troubadour, literally, and in very fact. His quiet resonant chanting became a familiar mark of his presence at almost any time of day or night. Throughout the luncheon, before I introduced him, he would pause, even in the midst of conversation, to intone, and practice, in a subdued way, vocal placement. His characteristic performance before an audience has been described by news reporters all over the country. There is no need for further description. At this luncheon, I found that as he would sway rhythmically back and forth, and lean far back, his eyes narrowing, he would at the same time catch my eye, and hold it until he was swept away in the very ecstasy of rhythm. Again, when chanting most rhythmically, the color of his eyes would suddenly seem to fade, leaving almost all expression to his voice and the rhythmical swaying of his body.

To him, there was no meaningful interpretation of poetry so important and so vital as that coming through song and dance. Meters cannot be scanned; they must be danced; they must be chanted. At the luncheon, he recited not only his own poems, but also Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Chanted, as Lindsay chanted it, "Kubla Khan" became not a succession of smoothly rhythmical lines, but an outburst of hundreds of harmonized vibrant syllables—

beautiful in intricate musical effects, and capable of numerous rapid changes.

In his own home, in Spokane, Washington, Vachel Lindsay had, he said, a large living room, which could be cleared for dancing and acting. Here his friends came with their children to join him and his family in poem dances. At the Baltimore luncheon, he read for us a poem on the courtship of a red-headed blacksmith. He told how boys might be called upon to act, and to do the reading of such a poem, while girls danced to the rhythms. He pictured for us a youngster, reading ecstatically, while the girls, with great freedom and grace, interpreted the rhythms in original dancing.

At the University of Wyoming, a few years ago, he introduced poem dances in the gymnasium. The teacher, Miss Edith Haight, after perfecting methods of instruction in this dancing, prepared a text-book which may be used by gymnasium teachers everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

Lindsay was an entertaining talker. His conversation, like his poetry, showed a versatile mind. He winnowed his environment constantly, and there was little that was timely that escaped him. On one occasion, he was full of self-reproach. The evening before at the Baltimore Poetry Club, he had talked upon personal themes too freely, he felt. He had gone before his audience when he was tired, he said, and weariness left him without discretion in speech. The evening at the Poetry Club seemed to him like a nightmare. He declared that he had been lost in a bog of garrulousness. It was always like that when he was weary. There was always the emotional flare, and the unguarded speech to follow. He lamented that his wife had not been there to put him on his guard. A friend from Springfield had looked at him in an agony of reproach, he averred, but even the entreaty in this friend's eyes did not stop his anecdote. This anecdote which I prevailed upon him to repeat to me had in it no word of doubtful

propriety, although it was personal. Vachel's remorse at having told it before the Poetry Club was but evidence of his sensitiveness to criticism. Nothing could save him from himself that night, Lindsay said. He lamented most feelingly that he had not sought a quiet five minutes with his old friend, Robert Frost. Lizette Woodworth Reese was in his audience, too. Every story, he seemed to feel, must have been a blow to her. He said, "Even my songs hurt her delicacy. But I did at least apologize."

At breakfast one morning I confessed that I did not always enjoy the poetry of Robert Frost. Lindsay scolded me for my weak appreciation of Frost and his verse. "You should like him," he said. "He is a teacher—an educator. He's like Emerson—the best of his sort in the world, and we need his kind. Were you in my room the other night with him and the boys? No? You might have heard him them. He's great at symposiums. He will talk until four in the morning, and then not stop." I admitted that I had heard Robert Frost talk on other occasions, and that I did like him as a monologist, and felt that he showed more of his personality on such occasions than in his poems. I like him better, I maintained, as a man than I care for his poems as poetry. After all, to me his poems are all alike—they are silver birches bowing in a wind.

But Lindsay still defended and praised Robert Frost. "He is not like that as a poet," he said. "As a poet he is not like his poems. They are all silver birches, as you say, or a frosty New England morning. But Robert Frost has more than that to offer as a poet, and he has written many poems that are different from that—poems that you will never read. It is his New England consistency that rubs out all else from the printed volumes save only these little metrical etchings of New England. Maybe this will make you understand," he continued. "He and Louis Untermeyer and I happened to be together when John L. Sullivan died, and we made a compact each to write an elegy on this fighter.

<sup>1</sup> Miss Haight describes dancing poetry in an article in THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW for November, 1931. Lindsay's own accounts of the poem games may be found in the Preface to *EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS*.

But I alone, out of the three of us, published his poem. Frost I know wrote his poem, and as he composed it, he beat blood from his two fists, pounding the table as he wrote. Then he tore it all up. The poem was not consistent—it was not a silver birch. And Robert Frost must be consistent."

"Do you hold this consistency, ever, that you speak of in Frost?" I asked.

"Sometimes," he replied, "I have a poem that is conventional—or nearly so. There are my poems on Hamlet."

"Of these," I ventured, "I like your 'Edwin Booth' the best. I read it with the others only a week or two ago to a class in American literature."

"Tell them for me that I prefer 'Hamlet.' It was written about ten years before the 'Edwin Booth.' I was walking up and down on the sidewalk in front of Chatterton's old opera house in Springfield. The thought of Hamlet made me a boy again, going to see Walker Whiteside. This poem is most like me. In it I am less consistent (on the Hamlet theme) than in either the 'Edwin Booth' or the 'Epitaph for John Bunny.'

I asked Lindsay about Negro lore. He replied that he was through writing about the African people. When he read "The Congo," he said, people not infrequently came up after the lecture to psycho-analyze him. "I'm through with writing Negro poems," he said. He showed some resentment for this treatment, and wrathfully denounced the inane and morbid curiosity of these upstart psycho-analysts. Psycho-analysis of this kind has been like corruption,—a poison to American authorship. "My knowledge of the Negro is a hybrid knowledge, anyway," he declared. But he knew the Negroes in Springfield, where one-fifth of the population is colored. He had seen race riots—the boiling over of race hatred.

This experience with "The Congo" led him to thinking about differences between the races, and in answer to his own question, "What am I?" he reached the conclusion, "I am a cavalier whenever I let loose. When I

am angry, I am like the 'Charge of the Virginians.' A cavalier mood is grand—it would be glorious to die in such a mood—say at 62—from a stroke of apoplexy," he declared.

I said to him, "Your 'Congo' is not really the spirit of the Southern Negro. I am a Southerner, and I know. It is the Negro in the jungle of Africa that breathes spirit into your 'Congo.'"

"Yes," he admitted. "It was written when I heard of the death of an African missionary. It was pointed to the jungle. But after all there is no great distance between the jungles of Africa and the Mississippi delta. Philip Gibbs—that marvelous thinker—said to me once, 'There are just three drinks between me and the jungle—but I never take those three drinks. I stop short of them.'"

Vachel Lindsay had many disciples of poetry at the Council meeting. They came up to say, perhaps, that they had learned to read his "Congo" as he taught them it should be read. He told me that one of the chief delights that he found in the Council of Teachers of English was repeatedly recognizing in the group young English teachers who had been in his audiences from their elementary school days. He had seen them again in high schools, and still again as university students.

He was the guest of honor at a luncheon meeting of the Council that week in Baltimore. Almost the entire membership of the Council gathered there to hear him, although the audience was supposed to be limited entirely to elementary school teachers of English. They came from Baltimore, from Maryland, from every part of the United States to hear him. He told them that children are never too young to enjoy the music of poetry. Young Nicholas at home was described as standing beside his crib, to which he clutched firmly, and dancing up and down to the rhythm of a poem chanted by his father. He talked about poem games and dancing poems. The audience joined him radiantly in chanting "Kubla Khan," and his own poem, "The Blacksmith's Serenade."

Vachel Lindsay, protagonist of metrical

# Two Kinds of Grammar

C. H. WARD  
New Haven, Connecticut

**G**RAMMAR may be a worse than useless subject, or it may be indispensable in the teaching of composition. All depends on what is meant by "grammar." To debate the function of grammar without defining the word is as foolish as to discuss "food" without agreeing whether we are talking about milk or grass: one kind of food is useful for children, and one is not. One kind of grammar is nourishing for pupils; another furnishes no sustenance whatever. Yet most pedagogical debates on this vexed matter are argued without any definition of the term on which all the reasoning depends.

## I. *The grammar that is useless*

If I open an ordinary textbook of grammar at page 1, I shall find a classification of nouns as proper, common, collective, abstract, verbal, and what not. The distinctions between these classes verge on metaphysics—for example, "A proper noun is the name of some particular object, yet this statement does not imply that a proper name cannot be applied to many objects; and, on the other hand, there are names of particular objects, as *sun* or *moon*, which are not proper nouns." If a grammar class were composed of fifty-year-old philosophers, they could engage endlessly in the convolutions of these categories—and get nowhere. If a class is composed of ordinary boys and girls, they can do nothing but blink and stagger among the mystifications. They are not taught anything; their minds may be permanently injured.

So you thumb through three or four hundred pages of the textbook and encounter dozens of similar systems of classifications that are not based on real distinctions and that produce no understanding of our lan-

guage. Of what conceivable use can it be to learn the distinctions between distributive and numeral and indefinite pronouns, or between gerunds and verbal nouns, or between conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs? The pupil who faithfully learns to distinguish between the old and the new conjugations of verbs is no better off than if he had used his time with some Anglo-Saxon inflections. Learning six classes of adverbs is not advancing a step toward any knowledge that can be applied in composition. A study of the distinctions between *shall* and *will* is an excursion into a realm of pure diction where only grammarians can breathe.

The marvel of the classification of verbs is a good example of the falseness and futility of a large part of all grammatical classification. All the grammars faithfully rehearse the Latinic formula that "a transitive verb is one which requires an object to complete its meaning." Yet there is no verb in the English language which may not be used without an object. And it is doubtful if there are more than a dozen that may not at times have an object. In short, there is hardly such a thing as an English verb that is, *in itself*, transitive or intransitive. Any verb is transitive active when it is used with an object; any verb is intransitive when it is not passive and has no object. The entire chorus of the grammarians cannot alter this philological fact. They cannot alter the pedagogical fact that the teaching of a false classification of verbs is a damage to pupils.

If you investigate the whole gamut of the contents of an ordinary grammar text, you will find that about nine-tenths of the matter is a set of forms and categories which are partially untrue and are wholly irrelevant for

application to composition. Consider the usual treatment of the sentence. The opening definition is "The expression of a complete thought." Now which of the following groups of words comes nearer to expressing a complete thought?

1. A little cottage, facing the lake shore, built of rough stone, with a row of glazed casements on the north for Gerald's studio, and two sunny rooms on the south for the children.
2. The cottage was small.

The first group, so completely expressing without predicating a complicated thought, is not a sentence; the second group, which gives such a bare and incomplete thought, is a sentence. Obviously this standard definition tells pupils nothing that will help them on the hard road to sentence-sense.

It is very generally believed that grammar helps pupils to correct common errors of speech by showing them certain principles—for example, that verbs must agree in number with their subjects. The belief is true to a small extent, but is largely false, for three reasons: (1) the principles that apply to common errors are few in number; (2) the power of principles to improve idiom is so slight that an overwhelming majority of pedagogical experts and practical teachers alike now consider it almost non-existent; (3) the principles may lead to incorrect idiom. As an illustration of how a principle may be a false guide, consider the rule that a verb must agree in number with its subject. Try to apply it to the two following idioms:

1. There *are* a dozen of them.
2. Five dollars *is* a high price.

If we use a singular verb for the singular subject *dozen*, or a plural verb for the plural subject *dollars*, we make egregious blunders. A rule of grammar is never a guarantee of correctness. We can only be sure of correctness by learning the individual idioms.

We must therefore conclude that a large part of grammar does not function in composition. The definition of this part of grammar is "The study of forms, classifications,

and rules for correctness." Grammar, so defined, is almost useless.

## II. *The grammar that is indispensable*

Another field of grammar may be defined thus: "The study of the structure of sentences." Grammar, so defined, is not merely useful; it is a necessity as a basis for composition.

What is a sentence? Our pupils are expected to divine the answer by some esthetic intuition. Teachers cannot find the answer in the grammars. Professors who prepare teachers do not even realize that an answer is needed. From bottom to top of our system of school composition there is a faith that sentence-sense will somehow appear in the classroom, but there is no definite procedure for teaching ordinary boys and girls why any given group of words is or is not a sentence.

There is little risk in prophesying that when teachers of 1960 look back at our way of dealing with the sentence in the 1930's they will be sorely puzzled. If they study our lack of method and try to understand it, they will be aghast. For we are relying, quite superstitiously, on the meaningless formula, *a complete thought*. We do not define "thought." We cannot define it. No convention of logicians could agree on whether the following groups of words express complete or incomplete thoughts:

1. That the police had apparently trapped a burglar in the closet on the third floor.
2. The sweet smell of new-fallen leaves from the lawn and the dank smell of the river mud.
3. You are not.
4. Who was almost seventeen years old, but had never been in school.
5. The water was rising fast, it began to trickle in under the door.

Yet a million high-school pupils are daily confronted with such groups of words and are expected to decide, by the application of a "complete thought" divining-rod, whether the groups are sentences.

We cannot teach by magic. We must provide definite information. The information must be in terms of specific and unmistakable and simple grammatical distinctions. If you had a class of trained grammarians, you could instruct them what a sentence is by one technical definition: "A sentence is an independent predication." But that is meaningless to pupils. Pupils must proceed toward knowledge of a sentence by steps like these:

1. What a noun is.
2. What "independent" pronouns are (i. e., the pronouns that are not relatives).
3. What a verb is.
4. What a subject of a verb is.
5. When a noun or an independent pronoun is the subject of a verb, a complete sentence results.
6. Two such complete sentences must be separated by a period or a semicolon.

These six steps will account for only the first stage of knowledge—what a simple sentence is. They are momentous steps. Easy as they may seem to a novice teacher, they are difficult and present complications which can be surmounted only by a resourceful and experienced teacher. She will teach nouns—yes; but not as a mere grammatical species. She will be dominated by one major purpose; to show that nouns are a kind of word which may be subjects of verbs. Pronouns are not merely a philological genus, but are words that may be subjects of verbs. Verbs are words, or groups of words, which can make statements; they are to be vigorously distinguished from the "to" words and the "ing" words that cannot make statements. Until a pupil can recognize verbs, he cannot begin to recognize sentences. Until he can learn how to find the subject which every verb has, he cannot know what the framework of a sentence is. Until he has some acquaintance with common modifiers—adjectives and adverbs and prepositional phrases—he cannot understand the great bulk of words that may cluster about a bare framework without increasing the grammatical completeness of a sentence.

When he understands about subject, verb, and modifiers, he can recognize the beginning and end of a sentence. He can separate two sentences by a period, and so avoid comma blunders. He has advanced through the first stage of sentence mastery.

The second stage is an understanding of the subordinate clauses which make complex sentences: the relative clauses that are attached to nouns or pronouns, the adverb clauses that are attached to verbs, the noun clauses that are, grammatically, no more than single nouns. He must learn by much familiarity with clauses that they do not make independent statements, that their relative pronouns or their subordinating conjunctions mark them as mere fractions of a sentence. Then he can learn to avoid writing a fraction as if it were a whole sentence, can escape the "half-sentence fault."

The third stage is learning what a compound sentence is—a combination of two or more independent sentences. The combination is effected in two ways: (1) by semicolons, (2) by co-ordinating conjunctions. Unless he uses a semicolon or a conjunction between the independent clauses, he is writing a "sentence error." The whole difference between a correct compound sentence and an unforgivable error is the use of a conjunction or a dot above a comma.

In every high-school class there are pupils who can attain a knowledge of sentences without this training in grammatical particulars. The editors and essayists and litterateurs who address words of uplift to teachers of English were of this type when they were in school. Since they never owed anything to grammar, they naturally assume that grammar is not a necessity for any pupils. They therefore inveigh against grammar. They are grievously mistaken and do endless harm. For they are blocking all average pupils from the only path to sure knowledge of what a sentence is—the grammar path. Our schools cannot produce decent composition except by laying a secure foundation of syntax, the grammar of sentences.

# Children and Poetry\*

MILDRED P. HARRINGTON

School of Library Science  
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

(Continued from March)

WITH adolescence should come a deepening and strengthening of the bonds of poetry if the child's natural love for poetry has not been dulled. The adolescent period is one of discovery. Life-interests are awakened, aptitudes discovered, vocations selected, and life-plans shaped. In this formative and impressionable period poetry should be an influencing factor. From poetry the adolescent youth learns not only what life is, but what he himself is. "Know thyself" was the admonition over the temple at Delphi and to this practical end the Greeks themselves used poetry. To the same end poetry may be used by youth—to come to some measure of self knowledge. There will be the same subject matter as in childhood, but also problems arising from a broader outlook on life—poems questioning our relation to the world and to God, and more self-analysis. The younger child finds his pleasure in the physical world because it is so new to him—the older child in the world of ideas because it is new to him.

Those wonderful companion volumes, *THE WINGED HORSE* and *WINGED HORSE ANTHOLOGY* come first to mind in any discussion of poetry for adolescence. The former is more than the story of the development of poetry. It is the story of the questing, creative spirit. The great poets of old become real people, as we see them in their relation to their environment. Another inspiring anthology is *THE JUNIOR ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD POETRY*. This volume gives young people a fascinating panorama of the lovelier things in verse throughout the ages by poets of all the west-

ern and eastern worlds. The selection is varied and the poems have been tested in the classroom before their inclusion. The choice of poems by English, Irish, and American poets is noteworthy. Untermeyer's *YESTERDAY AND TODAY*, and Benet's *POEMS OF YOUTH* are both interesting. The latter collection is particularly good for its thoughtful selection with the interests of youth ever in mind, for instance, the choice made of Robinson's poems: "Richard Cory," "Luke Havergal," and "Miniver Cheevy," and the many poems with story interest, such as Longfellow's ballads, Lindsay's "Broncho That Would Not Be Broken," "The Congo," and "A Negro Sermon: Simon Legree." Some of the poems will not be found readily in other collections, for example, Knibbs' "Roll a Rock Down," which reflects the ballads which were sung in early cow-camps and follows the native tradition of western song, and W. R. Benet's fine pioneer tale, "The Ballad of William Sycamore," both of which boys will enjoy. Then there is Frost's *COLLECTED POEMS*, containing the choice poems for youth of his earlier volumes.

Wilkinson's *NEW VOICES*, Gordon and King's *VERSE OF OUR DAY*, and the three volumes of modern verse by Jessie Rittenhouse will be especially enjoyed by girls. Rittenhouse's *LITTLE BOOK OF MODERN VERSE* has not been supplanted in popularity as an introduction to modern poetry for older girls. The poems are short, for the most part, chiefly lyrical, and there is sufficient variety to catch the interest of many types. Richard's *HIGH TIDE* is also a satisfactory volume to use with older girls. Millay's *POEMS SELECTED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE* is especially appealing to girls. The volume is full of fine poetry and vivid

\* This article was prepared under the direction of the Chairman of the Book Evaluation Committee of the Section for Library Work with Children of the American Library Association, Miss Harriet W. Leaf.

portraits and beauty. The short flippant poems with their tricky endings are not those to make a lasting impression, but there is an abundance from which to choose, and such poems as, "Afternoon on a Hill," "The Portrait of a Neighbor," "When the Year Grows Old," "God's World," the sonnets, and "The Ballad of the Harp Weaver" will be long remembered. Teasdale's STARS TO-NIGHT is a charming collection of lyrics. Some of the poems can be used with pre-teen age children equally well. This is also true of Millay's poems.

In Robinson's POEMS "Man Against the Sky" has a strong appeal for thinking boys. For boys, chiefly, is Kipling's SONGS FOR YOUTH and Masefield's SALT WATER BALLADS with their marked and appealing rhythms, Neihardt's SONG OF THREE FRIENDS, Leu Saret's SLOW SMOKE and Benet's JOHN BROWN'S BODY with its stirring, swinging lines.

Fortunately we now have a volume of Vachel Lindsay's poems for youth. Lindsay, the hero-worshipper, preacher and dreamer! He has translated the spirit of pioneer life, and the jungles of Africa, into booming, singing rhythms as in "The Sante Fé Trail," "Johnny Appleseed," and "The Congo." There is great variety in the selection of poems in JOHNNY APPLESEED AND OTHER POEMS—delicate humor in "The Little Turtle," "The Mysterious Cat," "Two Old Crows," and "A Dirge for a Righteous Kitten." Some of the poems lend themselves to poem dances and chants. Many young children of pre-teen age would love to chant such poems as, "The Potatoes' Dance," "The King of the Yellow Butterflies," and "The Chinese Nightingale." What boy would not thrill to the colorful, dramatic lines of "The Ghost of the Buffaloes," to the dramatic and tragic tale of "The Broncho That Would Not Be Broken," the fine epic of "Johnny Appleseed," and the pageant of colorful life and superstitions revealed in "The Congo"? The volume is attractive in make-up and addressed understandingly, "to all boys and girls who love poetry already, and for those unfortunate youngsters who

think they don't like poetry."

Carl Sandburg's EARLY MOON, so excellently illustrated by Daugherty, is a real contribution to the literature for youth. "Phizzog" while causing mirth will also bring thought. "Buffalo Dust" is an impressive picture of an almost forgotten past. Here are poems about "now"—prayers of steel, and girls who work all day with a "thingamajig" over their ears. The introduction is most delightful and should be read by all.

The child's library of poetry sketched here is not complete by any means, only suggestive, but sufficient perhaps to bring its youthful patrons to a keener enjoyment of this life's richnesses and a better understanding of its problems.

#### A POETRY LIBRARY

##### *For Very Little Children*

A CHILD'S DAY. Walter de la Mare. Holt  
 MOTHER GOOSE. Kate Greenaway. Warne  
 RING-A-ROUND. Mildred P. Harrington. Macmillan  
 WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG. A. A. Milne. Dutton  
 SING SONG. Christina C. Rossetti. Macmillan.  
 THE LITTLE MOTHER GOOSE. Jessie W. Smith. Dodd  
 A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES. Robert L. Stevenson.  
 Scribner  
 LITTLE SONGS OF LONG AGO. Willebeck Le Mair,  
 McKay  
 OLD NURSERY RHYMES. Willebeck Le Mair. McKay

##### *For Little Children*

LAND OF DREAMS. William Blake. Macmillan  
 POEMS BY A LITTLE GIRL. Hilda Conkling. Stokes  
 PEACOCK PIE. Walter de la Mare. Holt  
 TREASURY OF VERSE FOR LITTLE CHILDREN. M. E.  
 Edgar. Crowell  
 JOAN'S DOOR. Eleanor Farjeon. Stokes  
 SOME POEMS OF CHILDHOOD. Eugene Field. Scribner  
 THE POINTED PEOPLE. Rachel Field. Macmillan  
 TAXIS AND TOADSTOOLS. Rachel Field. Doubleday,  
 Doran  
 SKIPPING ALONG ALONE. Winifred Welles  
 POSY RING. Kate D. Wiggin. Doubleday, Doran

##### *For the Middle Years*

ONE HUNDRED BEST POEMS. Marjorie Barrows. Whit-  
 man  
 THE JANITOR'S BOY. Nathalia Crane. Boni  
 COME HITHER. Walter de la Mare. Knopf  
 ONE THOUSANDS POEMS FOR CHILDREN. Roger  
 Ingpen. Macrae  
 BOOK OF VERSES FOR CHILDREN. E. V. Lucas

HOME BOOK OF VERSE FOR YOUNG FOLKS. B. E. Stevenson. Holt  
 RAINBOW GOLD. Sara Teasdale. Macmillan  
 SILVER PENNIES. B. J. Thompson. Macmillan  
 THIS SINGING WORLD. Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt  
 GOLDEN NUMBERS. Kate D. Wiggin. Doubleday, Doran

*For Older Boys and Girls*

THE WINGED HORSE ANTHOLOGY. Joseph Auslander and F. Hill. Doubleday, Doran  
 JOHN BROWN'S BODY. Stephen V. Benet. Doubleday, Doran  
 POEMS FOR YOUTH. William R. Benet. Dutton  
 COLLECTED POEMS. Robert Frost. Holt  
 VERSE OF OUR DAY. M. Gordon and M. D. King. Appleton  
 SONGS FOR YOUTH. Rudyard Kipling. Doubleday, Doran

SALT WATER BALLADS. John Masefield. Macmillan  
 POEMS SELECTED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. Edna St. V. Millay. Harper  
 SONG OF THREE FRIENDS. John Neihardt. Macmillan  
 HIGH TIDE. G. M. Richards. Houghton  
 THE LITTLE BOOK OF MODERN VERSE. Jessie Rittenhouse. Houghton  
 THE SECOND BOOK ON MODERN VERSE. Jessie Rittenhouse. Houghton  
 THE THIRD BOOK OF MODERN VERSE. Jessie Rittenhouse. Houghton  
 POEMS. Edwin A. Robinson. Macmillan  
 EARLY MOON. Carl Sandburg. Harcourt  
 SLOW SMOKE. Leu Saret. Holt  
 STARS TO-NIGHT. Sara Teasdale. Macmillan  
 YESTERDAY AND TODAY. Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt  
 A JUNIOR ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD POETRY. Mark Van Doren and Lapolla, G. M. Boni  
 NEW VOICES. Marguerite Wilkinson. Macmillan

## VACHEL LINDSAY AT THE ENGLISH COUNCIL

(Continued from page 185)

dancing, troubadour, artist-poet, and America's laureate of wayside song was at the height of his robust musical powers at this meeting in Baltimore. Before the meeting, he had said, in a letter to me, "I merely want you to know that I am in good speaking fettle, better than any time since 1920 when I toured

England and I hope to remain so till I do my best on Baltimore. I will accept any suggestions you have to offer on any topic you announce, but I am far better at reciting than speaking, so will be sure to recite quite a little of my own verse whatever the subject. Very sincerely, Vachel Lindsay."

## TWO KINDS OF GRAMMAR

(Continued from page 188)

Some critics of education fear that grammar will stiffen style and artificialize it. The fear has no basis except in the work of fanatical teachers. For the literary-minded pupils may be as free as the most modernistic story-writer to indulge in non-sentences—provided only that they label any variation from normal as "intentional." They are not obliged to conform to grammar, but only to show that they know what they are about. Non-literary pupils—the great majority—are not hampered by gaining a thorough knowledge of sen-

tences, but learn how to escape from the bondage of ignorance. The grammar of sentences has been abundantly proved, in the practice of many teachers, to be the way to freedom.

Grammar is more than a way to correctness and freedom. It can show pupils how to make sentences varied and pleasing. Extravagant as that claim may sound to teachers who are unfamiliar with the possibilities, it is a plain and literal truth. Grammar can improve the style of the average pupil.

# Editorial

## AMERICA'S CAVALIER POET, VACHEL LINDSAY

AMERICAN, Middle-western, and vividly of his own times, Vachel Lindsay's poetic ability to understand twentieth-century America, and to look on it with penetrating sympathy, distinguishes him as a poet. His native qualities, his gallant championship of poetry, his splendid faith, and his whimsical humor have been commented on by the ablest critics. The consistency of Lindsay's career as a poet is shown by the fact that many of the critical appraisals of his work written six or even eight years ago, are true today.

Edgar Lee Masters, in *THE BOOKMAN* for October, 1926, commented that "the passing of time cannot detract from his originality." He grouped him, in imagination, with Blake and Coleridge, but declared him the most indigenous of American writers, and a "plant native to the Lincoln country; more native to it than any other American writer." It is interesting to us that one of the last poems Lindsay wrote, published in November, 1931, was an appreciation of the country school teacher who instructed Lincoln, Mentor Graham, of New Salem, Illinois. Masters sees Vachel Lindsay a century from now, "the most magical figure of this day" to a generation that will seek the significance of every detail of his wandering minstrelsy and chivalric quest for beauty. In the *SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE* for December 12, 1931, Louis Untermeyer points out that "he never ceased to be a protagonist for the preservation of the spirit."

Six years ago, in the May, 1924, issue of *POETRY*, Miss Harriet Monroe "took account" of Lindsay. She was peculiarly qualified to do this, for it was she who gave Lindsay that

recognition that established him in American letters when, in January, 1913, she published "General William Booth Enters Heaven," in *POÉTRY*. Time has confirmed Miss Monroe's conclusions, and the article is therefore of especial interest today.

"From the first," Miss Monroe avers, "this poet has been led by certain sacred and impassioned articles of faith—faith in beauty, in goodness, . . . in the splendor of common things and common experiences; faith so sure, so living, that it fed rapturously upon the present and never sought refuge in the past . . . Indeed, Lindsay is a modern knight-errant, the Don Quixote of our so-called unbelieving, unromantic age . . . his art at its best is adequate; Rosinante becomes Pegasus and soars beyond the moon.

✗ "It is appropriate that the American sense of humor should be, in this poet's mind, the law of perspective which ensures sanity. Lindsay's sense of humor is true to type in its extreme variety . . . But the laugh . . . is always genial, is never a satiric cackle: Often there is a wistful pathos in it, the trace of those tears which spring from the same bubbling fountain of human sympathy.

"Lindsay imparts a new flare of whimsical and colorful beauty to this American scene, and presents its extraordinary variety of emotion and mood. It is a generous gift—it makes us aware of ourselves in the true tradition of authentic art the world over. And the gift is not likely to diminish seriously in value under the chemical tests of time."

"The chemical tests of time" have not diminished Lindsay's gift, and will not in the future.

## Contributors

**Edwin Arlington Robison** has three times been awarded the Pulitzer prize for poetry, and has also received the gold medal of the American Institute of Arts and Letters. *THE TOWN DOWN THE RIVER*, *THE MAN AGAINST THE SKY*, *THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE*, *TRISTRAM*, and *CAVENDER'S HOUSE* are among his best-known works. His thoughtful consideration of Vachel Lindsay's poetry, on page 115, is an interesting tribute of one great poet to another.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Sara Teasdale** was for many years a friend of Vachel Lindsay. Her lovely poem, page 116, is reprinted here with her permission. Miss Teasdale is familiar to many readers of *THE REVIEW* by reason of her poetry, and also as the editor of *RAINBOW GOLD*, a collection of poems for boys and girls.

\* \* \* \* \*

The American book industry has felt the tonic and beneficent influence of **Frederic G. Melcher** in all of its phases, for he is Honorary fellow of the American Booksellers' Association, director, since 1924, of the National Association of Book Publishers, honorary president of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, editor of *THE PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY*, and has earned the undying gratitude of all teachers, librarians, and parents by reason of the fact that he is the founder of Children's Book Week and donor of the Newbery Medal for the most distinguished American book for children published each year. He knew Vachel Lindsay well, and set a high value upon his poetry.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Hazelton Spencer** is professor of English in the School of Higher Studies of Johns Hopkins University. He was a very close friend of Vachel Lindsay's, and wrote the introduction to Lindsay's *SELECTED POEMS* (Macmillan, 1931). In replying to the invitation to contribute to this memorial number of *THE REVIEW*, he commented, "I am delighted that you are going to feature V. L. He was much concerned for his child audience—that he won so large a circle of juvenile readers and so strongly impressed their teachers, is, I think, insurance that, unlike so many recently dead writers, he won't pass out of the contemporary picture even temporarily."

Friends of Lindsay today, and his admirers for many years to come will be grateful to **Dr. W. Cabell Greet** for recording Lindsay's inimitable reading of his poems. Dr. Greet is a member of the English department at Barnard College, Columbia University.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of **Susan E. Wilcox**, head of the English department in the Springfield High School, Mrs. Lindsay writes, "She is a graduate of Wellesley College, and an old and life-long friend of Vachel's. She was Vachel's English teacher in high school years." He paid tribute to her in the Preface to the *COLLECTED POEMS*. He said, (page XX) "Susan E. Wilcox is still head of the very distinguished English Department in the Springfield High School. Half the poems in this book show her stern hand. Leaving out the members of my own family, she is, without doubt, both as a person and a teacher, the noblest and most faithful friend of my life. She stood by me for years when I went through the usual Middle West crucifixion of the artist. . . . She will rise and testify that I am no improviser. . . . My alleged theory of the jazzing of poetry, which I have never endorsed or agreed to, amounts to just this: I submitted the "Hieroglyphic," and then read and re-read the poem to Susan Wilcox. Some of the British critics like neither my hieroglyphics, my spelling, nor my punctuation. I refer them to the wrath of Susan E. Wilcox. She has a reply, if they care to write to the Springfield High School. . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

**Catherine F. Wakefield** is Vachel Lindsay's niece, the daughter of his sister, Mrs. Paul Wakefield. Miss Wakefield is a sophomore at Radcliffe College, and president of the Radcliffe Poetry Club. Her recollections of her poet uncle on page 126, are of unusual charm.

\* \* \* \* \*

The author of *PARNASSUS ON WHEELS*, *THE HAUNTED BOOKSHOP*, *WHERE THE BLUE BEGINS*, and *THUNDER ON THE LEFT*, and the producer of successful revivals of "After Dark" and "The Black Crook" possesses to a marked degree the power to kindle his own enthusiasms in others. **Christopher Morley** has very kindly given *THE REVIEW* permission to reprint that portion of his latest book, *JOHN MISTLETOE*, which describes two of Lindsay's visits to New York.

An editor and a teacher, as well as a poet of note, **Witter Bynner's** position in American literature is a high one. He was president of the Poetry Society of America from 1920 to 1922, and Phi Beta Kappa poet at Harvard in 1911 and at the University of California in 1919. **GRENSTONE POEMS**, published in 1917, and **A CANTICLE OF PRAISE**, 1919, are among his volumes of verse.

\* \* \* \* \*

**George Mather Richards** and Vachel Lindsay were student friends at Art School in New York. Mr. Richards therefore writes with authority of Vachel against the studio background. He was the first artist, other than the author himself, to illustrate a volume of Lindsay's poems, **JOHNNY APPLESEED AND OTHER POEMS**, in 1928. Despite the fact that he has recently been working day and night upon drawings that had to be rushed, Mr. Richards took time to write the description, on page 130, of the poetry

that influenced Lindsay, and his life as a young art-student.

In the Preface to the **COLLECTED POEMS**, June, 1925, Lindsay wrote, "A member of the gang (a group of friends that ate at a restaurant they called the Pig and the Goose) who has followed my work, every inch of it, till now is George Mather Richards, still in New York City. I accept his censorship absolutely."

\* \* \* \* \*

The name of **C. H. Ward** is familiar to most English teachers, for he is co-author of the Ward and Moffett series, **THE JUNIOR HIGHWAY TO ENGLISH**. His article on "Two Kinds of Grammar," page 136 is provocative of thought.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Mildred E. Harrington**, of the Library School at the University of Louisiana, is the compiler of an anthology of poetry, **RING-A-ROUND**.



## Works of Vachel Lindsay

- GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH ENTERS HEAVEN, and Other Poems, Macmillan. 1913
- ADVENTURES WHILE PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF BEAUTY, Macmillan. 1914
- THE CONGO and Other Poems, Macmillan. 1914
- THE ART OF THE MOVING PICTURE, Macmillan. 1915
- A HANDY GUIDE FOR BEGGARS, Macmillan. 1916
- THE CHINESE NIGHTINGALE and Other Poems, Macmillan. 1917
- THE GOLDEN WHALES OF CALIFORNIA and Other Poems, Macmillan. 1920
- THE GOLDEN BOOK OF SPRINGFIELD: A Sealed Book of Prophecy, Macmillan. 1920
- COLLECTED POEMS, Macmillan (London). 1923
- GOING TO THE SUN (a book of drawings, Appleton. 1923
- COLLECTED POEMS (illustrated by the author), Macmillan. 1925
- GOING TO THE STARS, Appleton. 1926
- THE CANDLE IN THE CABIN, Appleton. 1926

- JOHNNY APPLESEED and Other Poems for Children, Macmillan. 1928
- THE LITANY OF WASHINGTON STREET, Macmillan. 1929
- EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS, Macmillan. 1929
- SELECTED POEMS (Modern Readers' Series), Macmillan. 1930

### *Privately Printed*

- WAR BULLETINS, being Springfield, Illinois, pamphlets, July to November, 1909
- THE TRAMP'S EXCUSE, 1909
- THE VILLAGE MAGAZINE, 1910
- RHYMES TO BE TRADED FOR BREAD, 1912
- THE SOUL OF THE CITY RECEIVES THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, 1913
- THE VILLAGE MAGAZINE reprinted, and enlarged 1920, 1925, 1926
- MAP OF THE UNIVERSE